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ILLINOIS WATER

the revival story

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ILLINOIS WATER

the revival story

Cool, clear lakes. Clean, flowing streams. These come to mind with the words "environmental protection." Today, though, a lake may have become a catch basin for wastes and a stream an open sewer.

Water pollution falls into two categories: untreated or inadequately treated wastes from easily identifiable sources, such as municipal waste treatment plant discharges; and waste from diverse sources such as silt, pesticides or fertilizers washing into a stream during a heavy rain.

The people of Illinois and their government recognize the need for corrective measures—the need for water pollution control.

Standards have been developed and enacted in Illinois to regulate and reduce the amount of pollutants in water. The job of the Division of Water Pollution Control of the state Environmental Protection Agency is to enforce those standards.

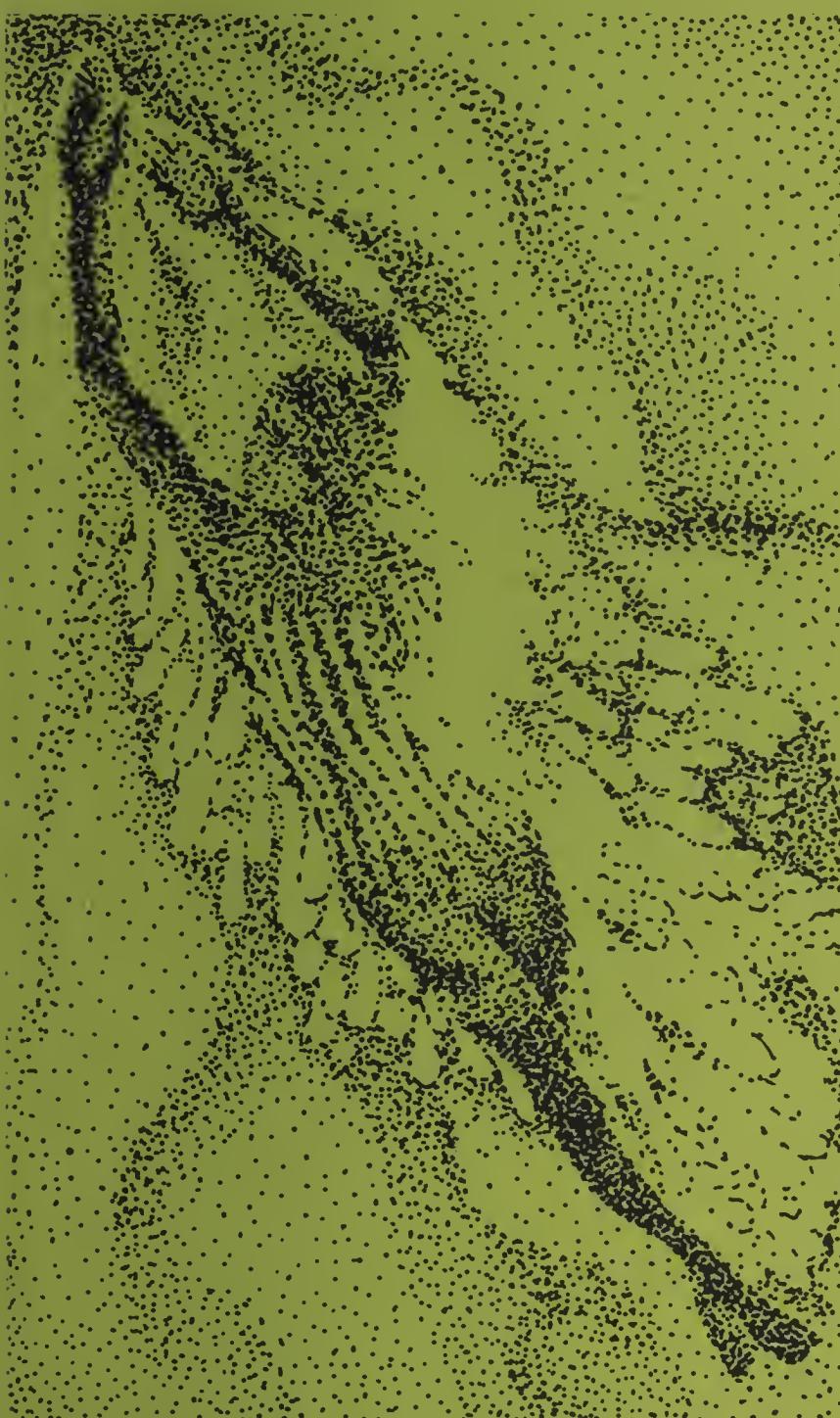
Hazards

Regulations are necessary because of the hazards posed by water pollution.

It upsets the balance of nature and causes substances not normally present to enter the systems of plants, animals and humans. Many times the plant or animal dies, or its habitat is so radically changed it must find a new home—if it can. Humans can be made dangerously ill or even killed by contaminated water.

Municipal sewage may contain organic substances that rob water of its life-giving oxygen—oxygen fish must breathe to live—or promote the growth of algae to dangerous proportions.

Chemicals from industrial wastes and agricultural operations, such as mercury, nitrates, phosphates, pesticides and acids, compound the algae problem and may poison marine life directly. These chemicals can also be dangerous to humans who swim in the water or who eat fish taken from it.



Action

To reduce and eliminate these dangers, the Division of Water Pollution Control continually

investigates water pollution sources and, where violations of regulations exist, prepares enforcement cases against alleged offenders if voluntary correction is not undertaken.

As an added precaution, wastewater treatment plant discharges and the quality of receiving waters are measured. Municipal and industrial sewage treatment plants must keep records of discharge characteristics. These are reviewed periodically by state and local agencies to determine if the facility is maintaining the required standards.

Grants

With the passage of the Anti-Pollution Bond Act by Illinois citizens in 1970, \$750 million in state funds was made available to assist municipalities in providing adequate sewage treatment. The amount of funds appropriated each year is determined by the General Assembly.

Division personnel administer the grant program, which offers funds on a priority basis for upgrading and constructing treatment plants and related facilities.

In a further attempt to realize the goal of clean water, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) was established by the federal government in 1972. Its goal is to achieve, where possible, water clean enough for recreational use and the propagation of wildlife by July 1983. By 1985, it is hoped all discharges of pollutants to our nation's waters will be eliminated.

Environmentally concerned citizens can help government and industry provide clean public waters by urging their local, state and national officials to support legislation directed toward that goal.

To learn more about what Illinois is doing to promote environmental health and well-being, write the IEPA, Citizens Assistance Section, 2200 Churchill Road, Springfield, Illinois 62706.

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